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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: February 19, 2015 **Contact:** Jonathan Raven, Chief Deputy District Attorney
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**Yolo County Receives \$1.9 Million Grant for
Neighborhood Court Program**

**Federal Grant Supports Restorative Justice Based Diversion Program Initiated By Yolo
County District Attorney And Staffed With Community Volunteers**

(Woodland, CA) – February 19, 2015 - District Attorney Jeff Reisig announced that on February 12, 2015, the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) approved the awarding of \$1.95 million in federal grant funds over three years to augment the Yolo County District Attorney’s Neighborhood Court program. Neighborhood Court is an adult criminal diversion program based on restorative justice that addresses criminal violations that impact the quality of life in the community.

Restorative justice is accomplished in Neighborhood Court by involving the victim, the offender and community members in a process focused on the harm to the victim caused by crime and the offender’s obligation to repair that harm. This process empowers those most affected by the crime. Neighborhood Court outcomes, to the extent possible, repair the harm done to the victim, emphasize offender accountability and responsibility while addressing the reasons for the offense.

Neighborhood Court offers an alternative to criminal court. Rather than charging a case for prosecution, the District Attorney’s Office will refer certain misdemeanors and infractions to Neighborhood Court. In Neighborhood Court, a panel of trained volunteers from the community participate in a facilitated conference with the offender. All conferences are confidential and participation by the offender is completely voluntary. In addition, any victim must also consent to the program for a case to be diverted into Neighborhood Court. If either the victim or the offender does not agree, the matter will be handled in the traditional criminal justice system.

Yolo County is only the second county in the state to have a Neighborhood Court program. The program started in 2013 in the City of Davis and the University of California at Davis. In 2013, Neighborhood Court held 154 conferences. In 2014, the number of conferences more than doubled to 338. The types of offenses handled in the program have also shifted towards a greater proportion of misdemeanor offenses. The percentage of participants for misdemeanors has increased from 37% to 57%.

This grant award will allow the District Attorney to expand Neighborhood Court to West Sacramento and Woodland. There will be an additional focus on the population of homeless offenders in the County. The grant, which is funded through the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grants, will provide funding for three years and will allow the District Attorney to hire necessary additional staff, including a social worker who will focus on cases involving the homeless population.

For Neighborhood Court to be successful, the District Attorney relies on dedicated community volunteers. This program creates an atmosphere of inclusion and responsibility by providing a direct role for residents to oversee the resolution of offenses in their city. To date over 100 community volunteers have supported this innovative program and more are needed for the expansion funded by the grant.

As a result of the grant award, the District Attorney is actively recruiting volunteers for the program in the cities of Davis, Woodland and West Sacramento. The next entry level training session for volunteers will be held in West Sacramento on Saturday, March 7, 2015.

To learn more about the Neighborhood Court Program, come to one of the following informational sessions: In West Sacramento on Thursday, February 26th or Tuesday, March 3rd, from 6:30pm - 8pm in the Community Room at the West Sacramento Police Department (550 Jefferson Blvd.) or in Woodland on Monday, March 2nd from 6:30pm - 8pm in the Community Room at the Woodland Police Department (1000 Lincoln Ave.). For more information on Neighborhood Court program go to www.yoloda.org. Volunteer applications are available online. You can email neighborhoodcourt@yolocounty.org or call (530) 666-8378 for additional information.

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